

The Close Fitting Wrapper

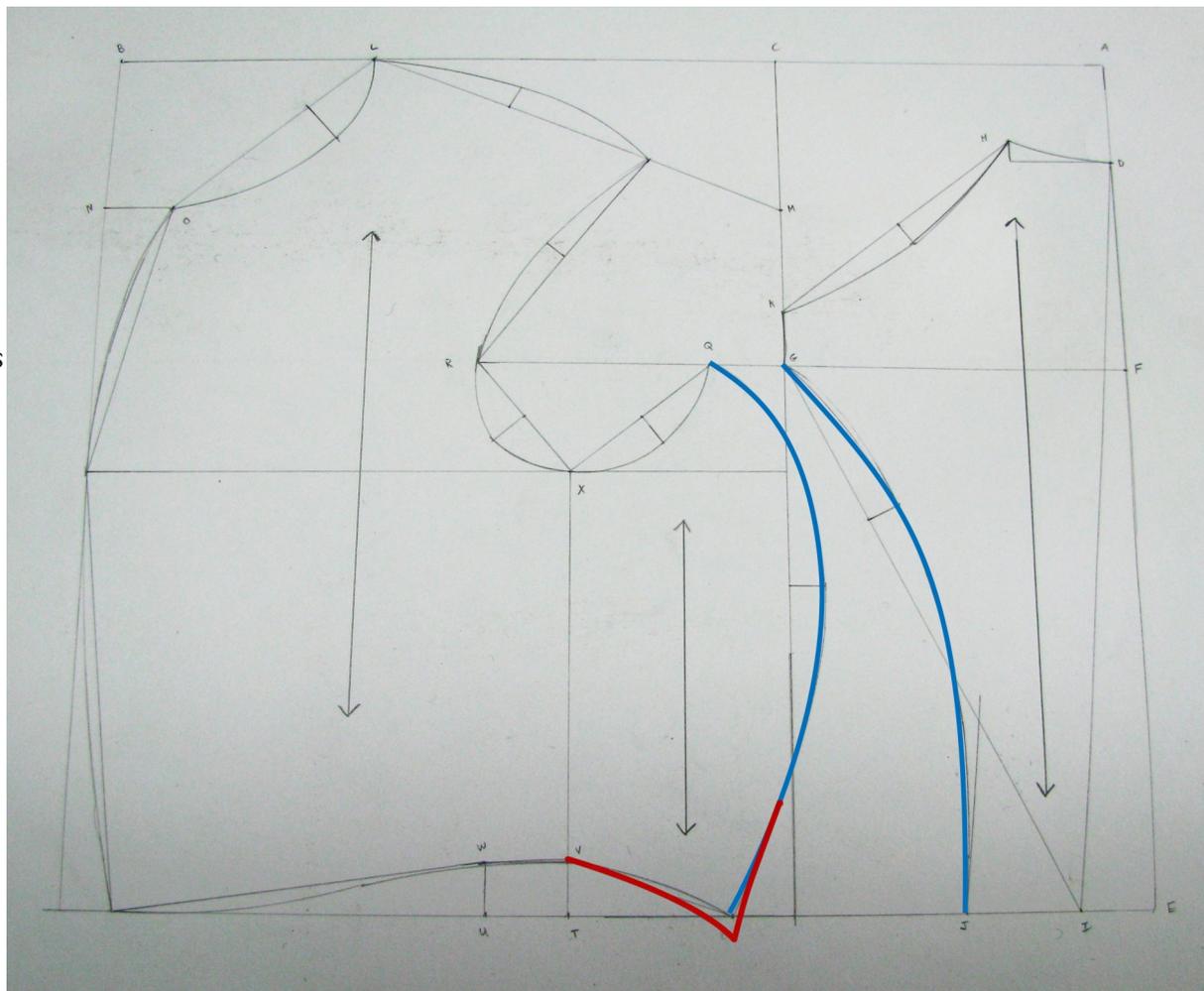
It is now time to begin the process of turning your draft into a wearable garment. In this module, you will learn how to add seam allowances, cut the pattern pieces, and cut out and construct the close fitting wrapper. This wrapper has two purposes: one is to check the pattern for fit before using your expensive fabrics; and two, to familiarize yourself with the proper frock body construction techniques.

Marking up and Truing the Pattern

Before you transfer your pattern, there are several things you should do beforehand. The first is to mark the plumb line on each piece of the pattern. Simply draw a line parallel to your construction lines as shown. It may be helpful to add an arrows as a reminder to pay attention to them.

Next, you must measure the side seam of the back, and compare it to the curved seam of the side piece, both shown in blue. The side piece should be about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inches longer than the back piece, for aid in construction. If you don't ensure this, you will have problems putting the coat together later.

To do this, simply move the point Z down the specified amount, square with the bottom construction line, as shown in the red. Then redraw the bottom and curved seams of the side piece, as shown.



Transferring the Pattern

Going from a draft to a usable pattern is a relatively straightforward process. Notice there are three pieces to the pattern. The front and side pieces are separated by the line X – V, and of course the back. It is highly recommended to preserve this original draft, and make a copy to cut out for use in sewing.

There are two methods I've used for transferring the pattern to new paper. The first is to lay the draft onto a new sheet of pattern paper, and carefully run over the seams with a pattern tracing wheel. The spokes on the wheel will poke through to the new sheet of paper. At this point, you then connect the dots and you have your new pattern pieces.

Make sure that you separate the side and front pieces when you trace. Simply move the draft over a few inches after you've traced one piece, then trace the other. This is to give you space to draw in seam allowances.

Another method is to put the draft on the bottom, and the new sheet of paper on top. If your paper is on the thinner side, you can see through to the bottom, and simply trace the pattern out. You can also use a light table if you have one. This is actually my preferred method, but do what you are more comfortable with. Again, make sure the side and front pieces are separated before tracing.

Seam Allowances

There are several schools of thought about Devere and seam allowances. Some add ½ an inch around every seam, except ¼ for the armscye. The issue with this method is that it makes the coat much less fitted.

The other extreme is adding no seam allowances at all. I've tried this several times and have found that major adjustments were

then needed for the pattern, as it had become too small.

Devere gives clues to his preferences on seam allowances. From his 1866 manual, he states:

In cutting out the garments in the cloth, it must be borne in mind that the seams are not to be allowed for. All the allowances requisite for the various seams, are given to the pattern by our systems of drafting, without any calculation.

However, in his 1856 manual, he has this to say about seam allowances:

When using the measures to draft any pattern whatever, there are certain differences to be made in the measures according as the parts of the coat corresponding to each of them are stretched hard or taken in, and also if these parts must fit tight or loose.

As a general rule, for woolen cloths we allow for the seams in the length of the cloth and not in the width, because cloth is nearly always elastic in the way of the woof, and often stretches more than is required for the seams.

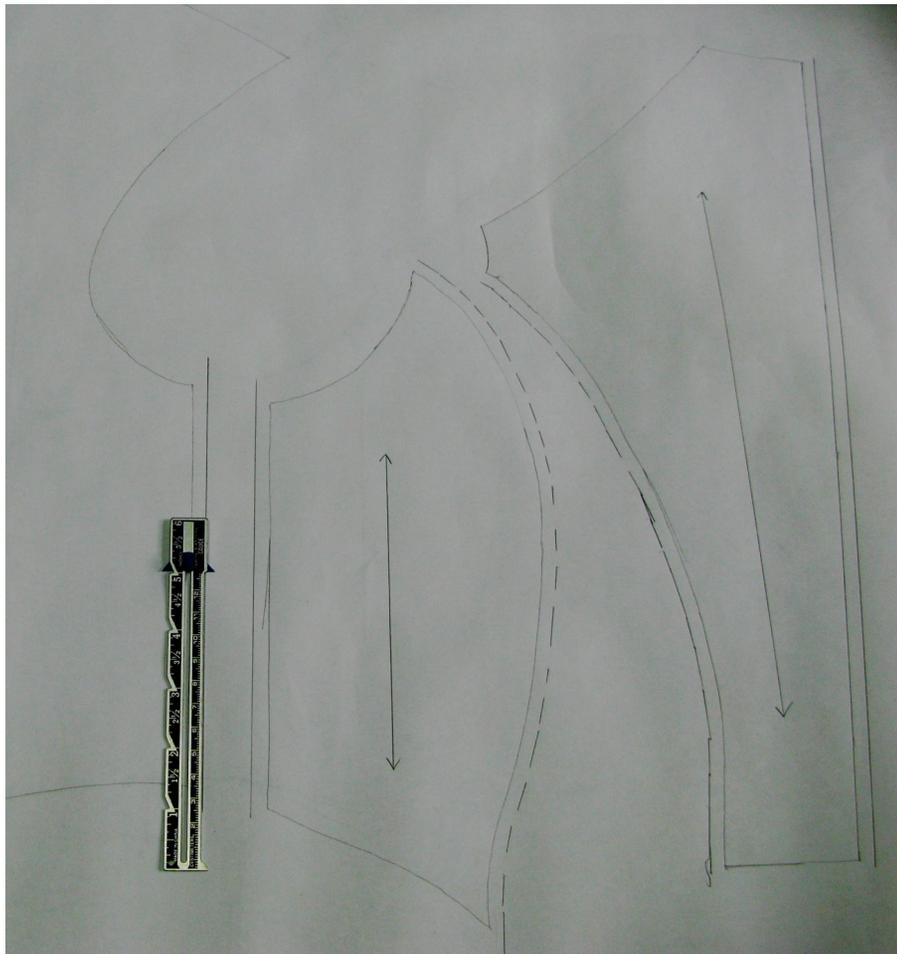
I generally follow his suggestions from the 1856 manual. I add seam allowances to the side seam, the curved seams, and the center back. I do not add a seam allowance at the shoulder seam, which I'll explain in much greater detail in a later module.

To add the seam allowances, you'll need your seam gauge. I like to line the seam up along the length of the ruler, using the slit in the middle for alignment. I then use the centimeter side to draw a seam allowance. It's slightly less than ¼ inch, but when you trace out the fabric, it ends up being just right.

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Add seam allowances to the following:

- Side Seam of Front
- Side Seam of Side Piece
- Curved Seam of Side Piece
- Curved Seam of Back
- Center Back



After you've added the seam allowances, you may cut out each piece carefully, using paper scissors. Don't use your good scissors or you will dull them!

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Striking the Pattern

After the pieces are cut out, it's time to lay them out on your muslin fabric. Make sure the fabric is smooth and free of wrinkles, and that the selvage edges are aligned, or at least parallel. The fabric should be doubled, not in a single layer. You will cut through two layers at once. Place each pattern piece on the fabric, being sure to align the plumb lines on each with the warp, or lengthwise grain. This helps the garment to hang properly.



Instead of using pins to hold the pattern pieces in place, you should use pattern weights of some kind. While these are available for sale, I find it easier to use what I have around. Rulers, scissors, books and other heavy items are perfect for this.

Then take your black tailors chalk, making sure it is sharp (a pair of old scissors is good for sharpening), carefully trace around the pattern with a thick chalk line. Mark an X on each piece of fabric,

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so you can figure out which is the right side later on.

When every piece has been traced, it is time to cut. When cutting, you should cut on the inside of the chalk mark, as the chalk adds a bit of width, which would throw off the fit. Do not snip the scissors entirely closed as you cut, rather cut until the scissors are only near the end. This helps you to cut a nice clean line.

After cutting, mark the other side with an X as well.

Ironwork

Before you do any sewing, you must do a little ironwork. Ironwork involves stretching or fulling (shrinking) the fabric in certain areas, and is part of what sets tailoring apart from other methods of sewing, such as dress making.

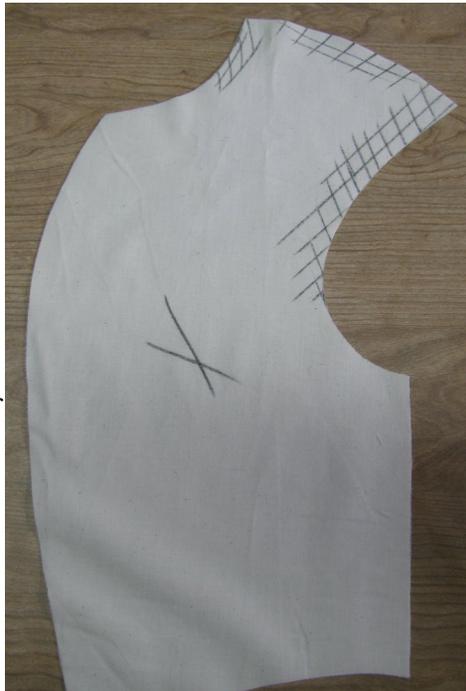
We will go into more detail of this when we do the ironwork on the actual wool, but for now, just follow along.

The areas to stretch are marked in the photo with hash marks.

We will refrain from any fulling for now, as cotton does not shrink well with the iron.

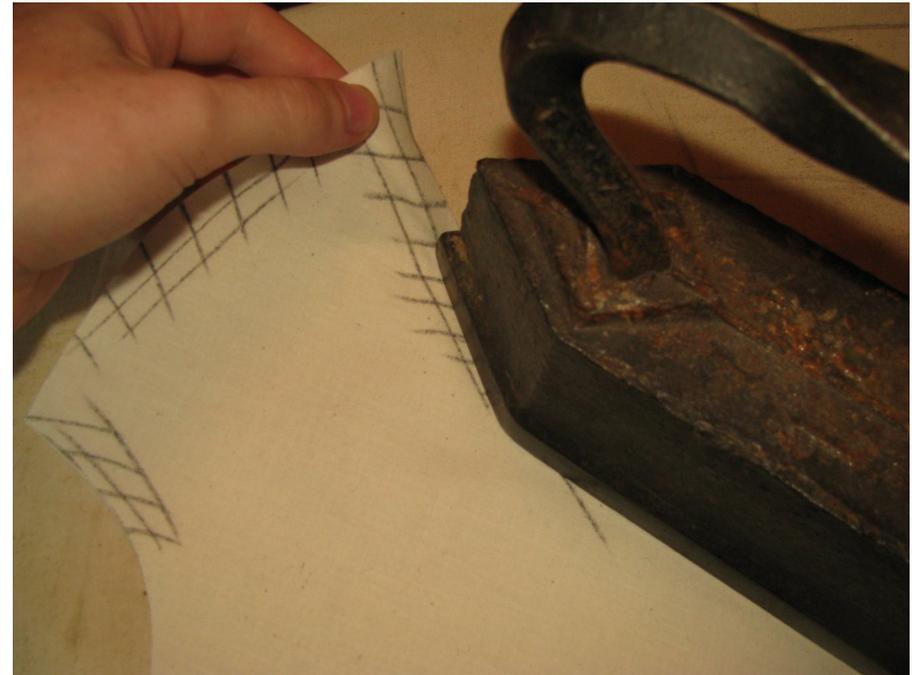
When stretching, both pieces of fabric should be together, so as to ensure the pieces are stretched the same amount.

When stretching the cotton muslin, don't pull too hard. A very slight pressure is all that is necessary.



Begin with stretching the armscye, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. Hold the fabric by the shoulder point and pull the fabric with the iron.

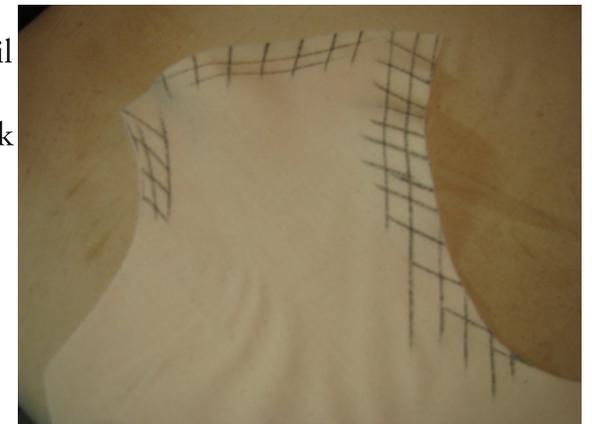
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Next, give a good stretch to the top of the shoulder seam, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch total. Finally, carefully stretch the neck starting just at the hollow near the top.

The results are shown in the following photograph. You can see a convex shape has been formed over the shoulder and scye.

Again, we will go over this in much more detail later on. This is good practice before you work on the wool fabric. But just know that it is helping impart shape into your garment, as well as helping to provide a better fit.



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Construction

Take up the side pieces, and lay them on top of the fronts, lining up the side seams as shown. About the only time I use pins is in constructing the muslin, so you may pin these pieces together as shown. Make sure right sides are together. The X's should be on the outside. Sew the seam, and press open afterwards.



Next, with right sides together, line up the side piece with the back piece. This is a complicated seam to line up properly. At the points where G and Q are from the draft, the side piece should extend the length of the seam allowance, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. At the bottom, the side piece should be $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the end of the curved back seam. Pin these two points together. Then starting from the top, ease the two layers together, pinning as you go.

It's pretty tricky, but that's why we're practicing. Then carefully sew this seam, with the side seam down. When sewing, the fullest

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side of the fabric should always be facing down. Carefully arrange the curved seam over a tailor's ham, and lightly press.

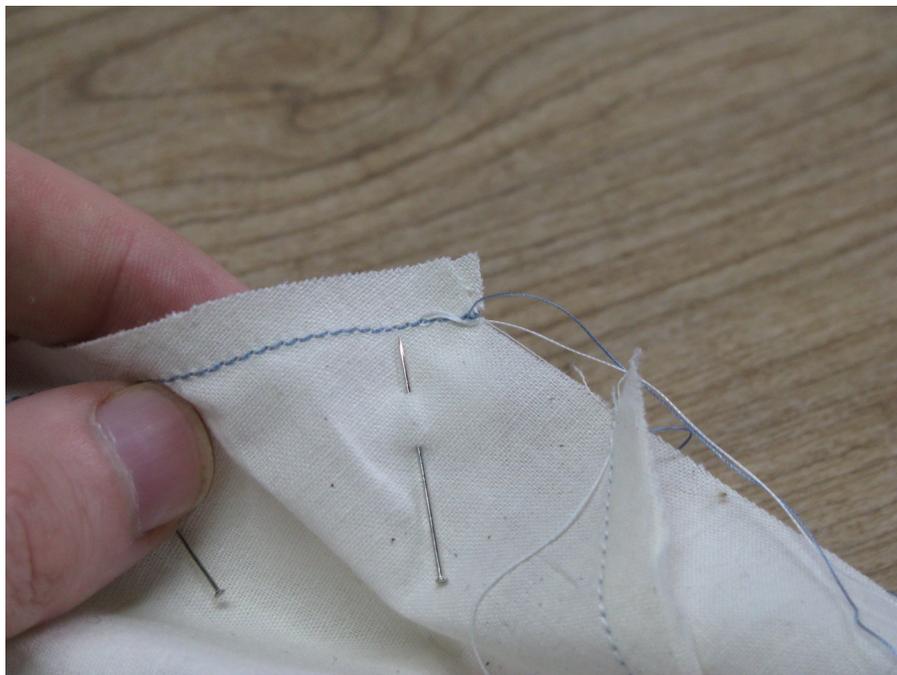


When that's done, line up the shoulder seams, again, right sides together. You'll notice that the back is a little wider than the front. This gives a little ease for the shoulder blades. You should pin the ends, then pin the middle, and then add two more pins in between, for a total of five pins. Ease the fabric in as you go, then carefully sew the pieces together.



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Note in the close up photo how the edge of the fabric is offset. This is so the seam allowances meet at the appropriate spot, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in from both.



Finally, take both halves of the wrapper and pin them along the center back seam, right sides together, and sew.

You have now completed the close fitting wrapper. Try it on and take photos from the front, back, and side, and post them on the forum for critique of fit. If for a client, be sure to have their permission first.

Over the next several weeks, we will be focusing on fitting, and drafting the rest of the pieces.

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